

George Hudgins, Chairman
Recreational Fishing Advisory Board
C/O Sonya Davis
Virginia Marine Resources Commission
2600 Washington Avenue
3rd Floor
Newport News, VA 23607

8 January, 2008

Dear George:

The controversy in recent weeks about the Governor's proposal to use RFDF funds to supplant general funds in the 2008-2010 budget has caused a great deal of discussion among CCA members and non-member anglers throughout the state. The intent of this letter is not to object to that proposal. Rather, it is to suggest a process the RFAB can undertake to help take back control of the fund and to assure its monies continue to be used to benefit recreational anglers as intended.

We think there are a number of areas where the RFAB can re-engineer the processes and goals of the fund to assure greater demand for projects that recreational anglers support.

The following are a few suggestions for your consideration:

1. Revise the grant application guidance (regarding the 25% match language) to let communities know that the match may not be required in certain instances. Define what those instances are. For example: an access (pier or ramp) project in an area where access is scarce and the locality cannot afford the match.
2. Revise the guidelines to allow for land acquisition for access projects and related parking. RFAB could "own" the land acquired to protect the recreational access rights in perpetuity.
3. Revisit the percentages for the various project types. Also consider new project categories. For example, should the fund be used to buy out commercial fishing interests to allow more recreational participation in certain fisheries?
4. Look at the educational projects that have been funded and decide how to improve and expand educational programs for children, anglers, local governments, and potential researchers.
5. Consider circumstances where RFAB grants could/should supplant general funds. For example, if additional personnel are needed for the reef program or the support other RFAB projects and initiatives.
6. Ensure future board composition reflects both diverse geographical distribution, while acknowledging relative angling participation representation, and board terms are staggered to allow for a degree of continuity.
7. Determine reasonable standards for staff investigation of projects in terms of time frames and site visit requirements.
8. Develop an outreach program for the fund including presentations to angling clubs and localities on how the fund can be used for access projects. This should

- be augmented with hardcopy pamphlets/trifolds/etc. that outline the purpose/intent of the fund and provide basic guidelines for project submission.
9. Start the outreach by visiting angling clubs throughout the state to educate and inform about RFAB and solicit input for this initiative.
 10. Develop guidelines for equipment funding that assures the equipment will be used regularly for the purposes intended. For example, RFAB funded the purchase of side scanning sonar equipment for the reef program which has seen little use. This is not meant to criticize the reef program personnel---there are just not enough days in the week for the two people involved in the reef program to do it all. That is why RFAB should consider a plan which should include something like an intern program that is specifically designed to perform research and monitoring with such gear as a condition of funding.

We request the RFAB consider these suggestions at the January meeting, and if the Board concurs with the potential value of the effort, that work sessions be scheduled as needed throughout 2008 to address these and other issues. CCA and the angling clubs will participate in any sessions to assist RFAB with the initiative.

Please let us know what you think of the concept and what we can do to help.

Sincerely,

Larry Snider
Vice President and RFAB Coordinator
Coastal Conservation Association, Virginia